

REMARKS

New independent Claim 29 defines the invention as a method for manufacturing a vehicle frame assembly that is adapted to be resiliently supported upon a plurality of vehicle wheels by a suspension system and is adapted to serve as a platform upon which a body portion of the vehicle can be mounted. Initially, first and second side rails are provided that each extend the entire length of the vehicle frame assembly to be manufactured. The first and second side rails are then hydroformed so as to have respective integrally formed mounting structures. Then, a plurality of cross members is secured to the first and second side rails to form a vehicle frame assembly that is adapted to be resiliently supported upon a plurality of vehicle wheels by a suspension system and is adapted to serve as a platform upon which a body portion of the vehicle can be mounted. Lastly, a component of the vehicle is connected directly to the integrally formed mounting structures of the first and second side rails without the use of brackets or other mounts. In the dependent claims, the integrally formed mounting structures are defined as being either inwardly extending protrusions or apertures.

None of the art of record shows or suggests this method. The Horton et al. reference discloses a method for manufacturing an engine cradle for use with a vehicle frame assembly. An engine cradle is not a vehicle frame assembly as shown in the drawings and as specifically claimed. As described at length in the specification and specifically recited in Claim 29, a vehicle frame assembly is a structure that is “adapted to be resiliently supported upon a plurality of vehicle wheels by a suspension system and is adapted to serve as a platform upon which a body portion of the vehicle can be mounted.” An engine cradle, such as disclosed in the Horton et al. reference, is not adapted to be resiliently supported upon a plurality of vehicle wheels by a suspension system and is not adapted to serve as a platform upon which a body portion of the vehicle can be mounted. Thus, the Horton et al. reference clearly does not show or suggest the claimed invention. Furthermore, neither the Horton et al. reference nor the Shah et al. reference disclose the claimed method wherein the first and second side rails are hydroformed so as to have respective integrally formed mounting structures

that are oriented so as to extend toward one another so that a component of the vehicle can be connected directly to such integrally formed mounting structures without the use of brackets or other mounts. Thus, it is believed that the claims clearly distinguish the invention over the art of record.